

VALENTI LAW APC

Matthew D. Valenti (SBN 253978)

E-mail: mattvalenti@valentilawapc.com

5252 Balboa Avenue, Suite 700

San Diego, California 92117

Phone: (619) 540-2189

Attorney for Stewart Thompson

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

STEWART THOMPSON,

Plaintiff,

vs.

FOUNTAIN VALLEY MUSIC
CENTER INC.; TRUE TEA PARKING
SJC LLC; and DOES 1-10,

Defendants.

Case No.:

COMPLAINT FOR:

DENIAL OF CIVIL RIGHTS AND
ACCESS TO PUBLIC FACILITIES
TO PHYSICALLY DISABLED
PERSONS IN VIOLATION OF THE
AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES
ACT OF 1990, (42 U.S.C. §12101, *et*
seq.) AND THE UNRUH CIVIL
RIGHTS ACT, (CALIFORNIA CIVIL
CODE §51, *et seq.*)

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

“[T]he continuing existence of unfair and unnecessary discrimination and prejudice denies people with disabilities the opportunity to compete on an equal basis and to pursue those opportunities for which our free society is justifiably famous.” 42 U.S.C. §12101(a)(8).

Plaintiff STEWART THOMPSON (hereinafter referred to as “Plaintiff”) complains of FOUNTAIN VALLEY MUSIC CENTER INC., a California corporation dba THE TEA HOUSE ON LOS RIOS; TRUETEAPARKING SJC LLC, a California limited liability company; and DOES 1-10, (each, individually a “Defendant” and collectively “Defendants”) and alleges as follows:

I. PARTIES

1. Plaintiff STEWART THOMPSON is a California resident and a qualified physically disabled person. He has paralysis and uses a wheelchair for mobility. Plaintiff prides himself on his independence and on empowering other disabled persons to be independent.

2. Defendants FOUNTAIN VALLEY MUSIC CENTER INC., TRUETEAPARKING SJC LLC, and DOES 1-10 are and were the owners, operators, lessors and/or lessees of the subject business, property, and facility at all times relevant in this Complaint.

3. Plaintiff does not know the true names of Defendants, their business capacities, their ownership connection to the property and business, or their relative responsibilities in causing the access violations herein complained of, and alleges a joint venture and common enterprise by all such Defendants. Plaintiff is informed and believes that each of the Defendants herein, including DOES 1 through 10, inclusive, is responsible in some capacity for the events herein alleged, or is a necessary party for obtaining appropriate relief. Plaintiff will seek leave to

1 amend when the true names, capacities, connections, and responsibilities of the
2 Defendants and Does 1 through 10, inclusive, are ascertained.

3 4. Defendants own and owned the property located at 31731 Los Rios St.
4 San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675 (“Subject Property”) at all relevant times.

5 5. Defendants operate and operated a tea house doing business as THE
6 TEA HOUSE ON LOS RIOS (“tea house”), located at the Subject Property, at all
7 relevant times.

8 6. Plaintiff alleges that the Defendants have been and are the owners,
9 franchisees, lessees, general partners, limited partners, agents, trustees, employees,
10 subsidiaries, partner companies and/or joint ventures of each of the other
11 Defendants, and performed all acts and omissions stated herein within the course
12 and scope of such relationships causing the damages complained of herein.

13 **II. JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

14 7. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction over this action pursuant to
15 28 U.S.C. §1331 and §1343(a)(3) and (a)(4) for violations of the Americans with
16 Disabilities Act of 1990, U.S.C. §12101, *et seq.*

17 8. Pursuant to supplemental jurisdiction, an attendant and related cause
18 of action, arising out of the same nucleus of operative facts and arising out of the
19 same transactions, is also brought under California’s Unruh Civil Rights Act,
20 which expressly incorporates the Americans with Disabilities Act.

21 9. Venue is proper in this court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. U.S.C. §1391(b)
22 and is founded on the fact that the real property which is the subject of this action
23 is located in this district and that Plaintiff’s causes of action arose in this district.

24 **III. FACTS**

25 10. Plaintiff uses a wheelchair for mobility.

26 11. Defendants’ business is open to the public, a place of public
27 accommodation, and a business establishment.
28

1 12. Plaintiff has been a customer of the tea house on several occasions.
2 His latest visit was on January 6, 2025. The receipt he received for his purchase is
3 shown in the photo below.

4

01/08/25	Check Card: TST*THE TEA HOUSE ON LOS San Juan Capi CA 01/06/25	-\$120.00
----------	--	-----------

5
6 13. Unfortunately, during Plaintiff's visit, Defendants did not offer
7 persons with disabilities equivalent facilities, privileges, advantages, and
8 accommodations offered to other persons.

9 14. Plaintiff encountered barriers that interfered with and denied Plaintiff
10 the ability to use and enjoy the goods, services, privileges, advantages, and
11 accommodations offered by Defendants at the Subject Property.

12 15. These barriers violate one or more standards of the Americans with
13 Disabilities Act ("2010 ADA") and/or the California Building Codes ("2022
14 CBC").

15 16. Parking for patrons visiting the Subject Property is among the
16 facilities, privileges, advantages, and accommodations offered by Defendants.

17 17. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, "a public
18 accommodation's first priority should be to enable individuals with disabilities to
19 physically enter its facility. This priority on 'getting through the door' recognizes
20 that providing physical access to a facility from public sidewalks, public
21 transportation, or parking is generally preferable to any alternative arrangements in
22 terms of both business efficiency and the dignity of individuals with disabilities."
23 ADA Title III Technical Assistance Manual §III-4.4500.

24 18. When parking is provided, there must be at least one accessible
25 parking space designated and marked for disabled persons. Where more than one
26 parking facility is provided on a site, the number of accessible spaces provided on
27 the site shall be calculated according to the number of spaces required for each
28

1 parking facility. 2010 ADA §502 et seq.; 2010 ADA §208.2; 2022 CBC 11B-502
2 et seq; 2022 CBC 11B-208.2.

3 19. However, there is no accessible parking for disabled persons at the
4 Subject Property because there are insufficient accessible parking spaces
5 designated for disabled persons and/or the existing ostensibly designated space or
6 spaces are significantly noncompliant with the applicable ADA and CBC
7 standards.

8 20. There are three spaces ostensibly marked as accessible at the Subject
9 Property. However, these spaces have no access aisle, no painted “No Parking”
10 where an access aisle would be, and no painted International Access Symbol. ADA
11 2010 §502.3.3; ADA 2010 §502.6; 2022 CBC 11B-502.3.3; 2022 CBC 11B 502.6;
12 2022 CBC 11B-108.

13 21. There is no ADA compliant parking signage. ADA 2010 §502.6; 2022
14 CBC 11B-502.6, 2022 CBC 11B-703.7.2.1.

15 22. There is no sign in a conspicuous place at the entrance to the facility,
16 or immediately adjacent to on-site accessible parking and visible from each
17 parking space, stating that vehicles parked in designated accessible spaces not
18 displaying a disabled placard or license plate will be towed. 2022 CBC 11B-502.8.

19 23. Plaintiff could not even enter the front entrance of the tea house to be
20 seated in the main dining area. The path of travel from the public right of way to
21 the entrance includes several concrete steps, with no ramp or wheelchair lift
22 provided making it inaccessible to wheelchair users. 2010 ADA §206; 2010 ADA
23 §303.4; 2010 ADA §403.4; 2022 CBC 11B-206; 2022 CBC 11B- 303.4; 2022
24 CBC 11B- 403.4.

25 24. There are accessible paths of travel to outdoor seating areas located on
26 the front patio and the back patio. However, there is no signage directing disabled
27 customers to the nearest accessible entrance. 2010 ADA §216.6; 2010 ADA §404;
28

1 2010 ADA §703.5; 2010 ADA §703.7.2.1; 2022 CBC 11B-216.6; 2022 CBC 11B-
2 404; 2022 CBC 11B-703.5; 2022 CBC 11B-703.7.2.1.

3 25. Plaintiff and his family member were taken to the back patio by a host
4 to be seated. However, none of the tables in the back patio are ADA compliant. In
5 fact, none of the tables in any of the dining areas are accessible to a person in a
6 wheelchair. Where dining surfaces are provided for the consumption of food and
7 drink, at least 5% of those must be accessible. There must be minimum dimensions
8 for the clearance under an accessible dining table so that the legs and toes of a
9 person in a wheelchair can fit under the table. In particular, the required depth for
10 toe clearance under an accessible table is a minimum of 17 inches. 2010 ADA
11 §226.1; 2010 ADA §306.2.3; 2010 ADA §902; 2022 CBC 11B-226.1; 2022 CBC
12 11B-306.2.3; 2022 CBC 11B-902.

13 26. While Plaintiff was dining, he sent his family member to see if there
14 was an accessible restroom. She informed him that there was a step, or steps,
15 blocking the path of travel from the back patio to the restroom. There was no
16 chance he could get to this restroom in his wheelchair. Plaintiff was forced to
17 forego using the restroom while at the tea house.

18 27. It is unclear whether there is an accessible restroom located on the
19 property. Yelp reviews mention the tea house having two restrooms and several
20 reviews indicate the restrooms are inaccessible for wheelchair users. However,
21 there is no sign in the front and back patio seating areas directing customers to the
22 location of an accessible restroom.

23 28. The photo below shows one or more of these violations.

24 //

25 //

26 //

27 //

28 //



29. The barriers existed during Plaintiff's visit to the Subject Property. Plaintiff personally encountered these barriers.

30. These inaccessible conditions and barriers denied Plaintiff full and equal access and caused him difficulty, discomfort, and embarrassment. Because of the lack of compliant parking and a compliant access aisle, Plaintiff was placed at risk of being blocked in by other vehicles and unable to get out of his vehicle or get back into it. He was also at greater risk of being hit by a car while transferring to and from his wheelchair. Because of the lack of compliant seating Plaintiff was in the way of the path of travel to service areas, did not feel properly seated at a table as other patrons would, could not comfortably reach his meal, and risked dropping

1 or spilling food onto his lap as he ate. Because of the lack of an accessible path of
2 travel to the restroom, and/or signs directing him to an accessible restroom,
3 Plaintiff was unable to use the restroom during any of his visits to the tea house.

4 31. These barriers denied Plaintiff full and equal access due to his
5 disability because, *inter alia*, they caused Plaintiff anxiety, difficulty, discomfort,
6 and embarrassment which patrons who do not use a wheelchair for mobility do not
7 suffer when they access the Subject Property.

8 32. Plaintiff also has Article III standing because has visited the subject
9 property multiple times to enjoy meals with his family and/or friends. The Subject
10 Property is conveniently located and in the general area where he lives, shops, goes
11 to medical appointments, visits family and friends, recreates, and does other
12 normal activities in his daily life. Therefore, Plaintiff intends to return to the
13 Subject Property in the near future to have another meal after the accessibility
14 barriers alleged herein have been removed.

15 33. Plaintiff alleges that Defendants knew that the barriers prevented
16 equal access. Plaintiff further alleges that Defendants had actual or constructive
17 knowledge that the architectural barriers prevented equal access, and that the
18 noncompliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Title 24 of the
19 California Building Code regarding accessible features was intentional.

20 34. Defendants have obstructed or failed to maintain, in working and
21 useable conditions, those features necessary to provide ready access to persons
22 with disabilities. "A public accommodation shall maintain in operable working
23 condition those features of facilities and equipment that are required to be readily
24 accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities." 28 C.F.R. §36.211(a); 2022
25 CBC 11B-108.

26 35. The State of California Department of General Servicers, Division of
27 the State Architect (DSA) provides commentary to 2022 CBC 11B-108 as follows:
28

1 Features for accessibility must be permanently functional, unobstructed
2 and may not be removed. It is not sufficient to provide features such as
3 accessible routes, parking, elevators, ramps or signage if those features
4 are not maintained in a manner that enables individuals with disabilities
to use them.

5 DSA, 2019 California Access Compliance Advisory Reference Manual, p.84.

6 36. Defendants have the financial resources to remove these barriers
7 without much expense or difficulty in order to make their property more accessible
8 to their mobility impaired customers. The United States Department of Justice has
9 identified that these types of barriers are readily achievable to remove.

10 37. To date, Defendants refuse to remove these barriers, in violation of
11 the law, willfully depriving disabled persons including Plaintiff of important civil
12 rights.

13 38. On information and belief, Plaintiff alleges that the Defendants'
14 failure to remove these barriers was intentional because the barriers are logical and
15 obvious. During all relevant times Defendants had authority, control, and dominion
16 over these conditions and therefore the absence of accessible facilities was not a
17 mishap, but rather an intentional act.

18 39. The barriers to access are listed above without prejudice to Plaintiff
19 citing additional barriers to equal access by an amended complaint after inspection
20 by Plaintiff's Certified Access Specialist (CAsp). *Oliver v. Ralphs Grocery Co.*,
21 654 F.3d 903 (9th Cir. 2011); *Doran v. 7-Eleven, Inc.*, 524 F.3d 1034 (9th Cir.
22 2008); *Chapman v. Pier One Imports (USA), Inc.*, 631 F.3d 939 (9th Cir. 2011).
23 All of these barriers to access render the premises inaccessible to physically
24 disabled persons who are mobility impaired, such as Plaintiff, are barriers Plaintiff
25 may encounter when he returns to the premises. All public accommodations must
26 be brought into compliance with all applicable federal and state accessibility
27 requirements.
28

FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

Violation of the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990

(42 U.S.C. §12101, *et seq.*)

(Against All Defendants)

40. Plaintiff alleges and incorporates by reference, as if fully set forth again herein, each and every allegation contained in all prior paragraphs of this complaint.

41. More than thirty years ago, the 101st United States Congress found that although “physical or mental disabilities in no way diminish a person’s right to fully participate in all aspects of society, yet many people with physical or mental disabilities have been precluded from doing so because of discrimination...in such critical areas as employment, housing, public accommodations, education, transportation, communication, recreation, institutionalization, health services, voting, and access to public services.” 42 U.S.C. §12101(a).

42. In 1990 Congress also found that “the Nation’s proper goals regarding individuals with disabilities are to assure equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for such individuals,” but that “the continuing existence of unfair and unnecessary discrimination and prejudice denies people with disabilities the opportunity to compete on an equal basis and to pursue those opportunities for which our free society is justifiably famous.” 42 U.S.C. §12101(a).

43. In passing the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which was signed into law by President George H. W. Bush on July 26, 1990 (hereinafter the “ADA”), Congress stated as its purpose:

“It is the purpose of this Act

(1) to provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities;

1 (2) to provide clear, strong, consistent, enforceable standards
2 addressing discrimination against individuals with disabilities;

3 (3) to ensure that the Federal Government plays a central role in
4 enforcing the standards established in this Act on behalf of individuals
5 with disabilities; and

6 (4) to invoke the sweep of congressional authority, including the power
7 to enforce the fourteenth amendment and to regulate commerce, in
8 order to address the major areas of discrimination faced day to-day by
9 people with disabilities.”

9 42 USC §12101(b).

10 44. As part of the ADA, Congress passed “Title III – Public
11 Accommodations and Services Operated by Private Entities” (42 U.S.C. §12181 *et*
12 *seq.*). Title III of the ADA prohibits discrimination against any person “on the
13 basis of disability in the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities,
14 privileges, advantages, or accommodations of any place of public accommodation
15 by any person who owns, leases (or leases to), or operates a place of public
16 accommodation.” 42 U.S.C. §12182(a).

17 45. The specific prohibitions against discrimination include, *inter alia*, the
18 following:

- 19 • 42 U.S.C. §12182(b)(1)(A)(ii): “Participation in Unequal Benefit. - It
20 shall be discriminatory to afford an individual or class of individuals,
21 on the basis of a disability or disabilities of such individual or class,
22 directly, or through contractual, licensing, or other arrangements, with
23 the opportunity to participate in or benefit from a good, service, facility,
24 privilege, advantage, or accommodation that is not equal to that
25 afforded to other individuals.”
- 26 • 42 U.S.C. §12182(b)(2)(A)(ii): “a failure to make reasonable
27 modifications in policies, practices, or procedures when such
28 modifications are necessary to afford such goods, services, facilities,
privileges, advantages, or accommodations to individuals with
disabilities...;”

- 42 U.S.C. §12182(b)(2)(A)(iii): “a failure to take such steps as may be necessary to ensure that no individual with a disability is excluded, denied service, segregated, or otherwise treated differently than other individuals because of the absence of auxiliary aids and services...;”
- 42 U.S.C. §12182(b)(2)(A)(iv): “a failure to remove architectural barriers, and communication barriers that are structural in nature, in existing facilities... where such removal is readily achievable;”
- 42 U.S.C. §12182(b)(2)(A)(v): “where an entity can demonstrate that the removal of a barrier under clause (iv) is not readily achievable, a failure to make such goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations available through alternative methods if such methods are readily achievable.”

46. Plaintiff is a qualified individual with a disability as defined in the Rehabilitation Act and in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

47. The acts and omissions of Defendants set forth herein were in violation of Plaintiff’s rights under the ADA and the regulations promulgated thereunder, 28 C.F.R. Part 36 *et seq.*

48. The removal of each of the physical and policy barriers complained of by Plaintiff as hereinabove alleged, were at all times herein mentioned “readily achievable” under the standards of §12181 and §12182 of the ADA. Removal of each and every one of the architectural and/or policy barriers complained of herein was already required under California law. Further, on information and belief, alterations, structural repairs or additions since January 26, 1993, have also independently triggered requirements for removal of barriers to access for disabled persons per §12183 of the ADA. In the event that removal of any barrier is found to be “not readily achievable,” Defendants still violated the ADA, per §12182(b)(2)(A)(v) by failing to provide all goods, services, privileges, advantages and accommodations through alternative methods that were “readily achievable.”

1 49. On information and belief, as of the date of Plaintiff's encounter at the
2 premises and as of the filing of this Complaint, Defendants' actions, policies, and
3 physical premises have denied and continue to deny full and equal access to
4 Plaintiff and to other mobility disabled persons in other respects, which violate
5 Plaintiff's right to full and equal access and which discriminate against Plaintiff on
6 the basis of his disabilities, thus wrongfully denying to Plaintiff the full and equal
7 enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and
8 accommodations, in violation of 42 U.S.C. §12182 and §12183 of the ADA.

9 50. Defendants' actions continue to deny Plaintiff's rights to full and
10 equal access and discriminated and continue to discriminate against him on the
11 basis of his disabilities, thus wrongfully denying to Plaintiff the full and equal
12 enjoyment of Defendants' goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and
13 accommodations, in violation of the ADA, 42 U.S.C. §12182.

14 51. Further, each and every violation of the Americans With Disabilities
15 Act of 1990 also constitutes a separate and distinct violation of California Civil
16 Code §51(f), §52, §54(c) and §54.1(d), thus independently justifying an award of
17 damages and injunctive relief pursuant to California law, including but not limited
18 to Civil Code §54.3 and §55.

19 **SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION**

20 Violation of the Unruh Civil Rights Act

21 (California Civil Code §51, *et seq.*)

22 (Against All Defendants)

23 52. Plaintiff alleges and incorporates by reference, as if fully set forth
24 again herein, each and every allegation contained in all prior paragraphs of this
25 complaint.

26 53. California Civil Code §51 provides that physically disabled persons
27 are free and equal citizens of the state, regardless of their medical condition or
28 disability:

1 All persons within the jurisdiction of this state are free and equal, and
2 no matter what their sex, race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin,
3 **disability, or medical condition** are entitled to full and equal
4 accommodations, advantages, facilities, privileges, or services in all
business establishments of every kind whatsoever.

5 California Civil Code §51(b) (emphasis added).

6 54. California Civil Code §51.5 also states, in part: “No business,
7 establishment of any kind whatsoever shall discriminate against...any person in
8 this state on account” of their disability.

9 55. California Civil Code §51(f) specifically incorporates (by reference)
10 an individual’s rights under the ADA into the Unruh Act.

11 56. California Civil Code §52 provides that the discrimination by
12 Defendants against Plaintiff on the basis of his disability constitutes a violation of
13 the general antidiscrimination provisions of §51 and §52.

14 57. Each of Defendants’ discriminatory acts or omissions constitutes a
15 separate and distinct violation of California Civil Code §52, which provides that:

16 Whoever denies, aids or incites a denial, or makes any discrimination
17 or distinction contrary to section 51, 51.5, or 51.6 is liable for each and
18 every offense for the actual damages, and any amount that may be
19 determined by a jury, or a court sitting without a jury, up to a maximum
20 of three times the amount of actual damage but in no case less than four
21 thousand dollars (\$4,000), and any attorney’s fees that may be
determined by the court in addition thereto, suffered by any person
denied the rights provided in Section 51, 51.5, or 51.6.

22 58. Any violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
23 constitutes a violation of California Civil Code §51(f), thus independently
24 justifying an award of damages and injunctive relief pursuant to California law,
25 including Civil Code §52. Per Civil Code §51(f), “A violation of the right of any
26 individual under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-
27 336) shall also constitute a violation of this section.”
28

1 by Plaintiff and similarly situated persons with disabilities, and which
2 provide full and equal access, as required by law, and to maintain such
3 accessible facilities once they are provided; to cease any discriminatory
4 policies; and to train Defendants' employees and agents how to
5 recognize disabled persons and accommodate their rights and needs;

6 2. Retain jurisdiction over the Defendants until such time as
7 the Court is satisfied that Defendants' unlawful policies, practices, acts
8 and omissions, and maintenance of physically inaccessible public
9 facilities and policies as complained of herein no longer occur, and
10 cannot recur;

11 3. Award to Plaintiff all appropriate damages, including but
12 not limited to actual and statutory damages according to proof;

13 4. Award to Plaintiff all reasonable attorney fees, litigation
14 expenses, and costs of this proceeding pursuant to 42 U.S.C §12205 and
15 California Civil Code §52; and

16 5. Grant such other and further relief as this Court may deem
17 just and proper.

18
19 DATED: March 26, 2025

VALENTI LAW APC

20
21 By: /s/ Matthew D. Valenti

22 Matthew D. Valenti
23 Attorney for Plaintiff
24 Stewart Thompson
25
26
27
28

JURY DEMAND

Plaintiff hereby demands a trial by jury for all claims and issues for which a jury is permitted.

DATED: March 26, 2025

VALENTI LAW APC

By: /s/ Matthew D. Valenti

Matthew D. Valenti
Attorney for Plaintiff
Stewart Thompson